**U.S. to Sanction International Criminal Court for War Crimes Investigation Into U.S. and Allies**

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The Trump administration on Thursday took the unprecedented step of authorizing sanctions against International Criminal Court officials and any individual or affiliate participating in war crimes investigations into the United States and its allies, according to a senior Trump administration official.

A new executive order signed by President Donald Trump authorizes the State and Treasury Departments to sanction top ICC officials for participating in what the United States describes as unjust investigations into its actions in Afghanistan. The new authorizations are being granted under national security statutes deeming the ICC’s actions a national emergency.

The president has also authorized the expansion of visa restrictions against International Criminal Court officials and their family members.

The new sanctions are the latest salvo in the Trump administration's war against the ICC. Top U.S. officials claim the court is waging these investigations in a bid to discredit the United States and its allies on the international stage.

"Despite repeated calls by the United States and our allies to reform, the International Criminal Court has taken no action to reform itself and continues to pursue politically-motivated investigations against us and our allies, including Israel," White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany said in a statement. "We are concerned that adversary nations are manipulating the International Criminal Court by encouraging these allegations against United States personnel. Further, we have strong reason to believe there is corruption and misconduct at the highest levels of the International Criminal Court Office of the Prosecutor, calling into question the integrity of its investigation into American service members."

The ICC is pursuing charges against the United States for alleged war crimes in Afghanistan. It also is investigating a case against Israel for its military action in the Palestinian-controlled territories. The new sanctions will target any individual associated with these investigations, according to a senior Trump administration official.

"The ICC continues to pursue politically motivated investigations" against the United States and Israel that are riddled with corruption, the administration official said, speaking only on background about the decision. Further, the official said there is evidence that Russia is manipulating the ICC to discredit the United States and its allies.

Trump’s executive order will enable the State and Treasury Departments to block the financial assets of any ICC official designated under the new authority. It also would block the entry to the United States of ICC employees and others who are engaged in efforts to prosecute the United States and its allies.

Determinations will be made in the coming weeks, according to the senior administration official, who declined to provide further details on the potential designations as of Thursday morning. There are roughly 1,000 ICC employees, and it remains unclear how many could be sanctioned under the new statute.

The Washington Free Beacon first reported last month that the ICC is working alongside several organizations and individuals tied to terrorism. It is believed that these groups are another driving force behind the ICC’s investigations into the United States and Israel.

Update 9:46 a.m.: This post has been updated with a statement from the White House press secretary.